

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 23RD NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS WINTER SPORTS CLINIC

SkiGram

TUESDAY EDITION • MARCH 31, 2009

www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov

Adaptive Skiing Evolves

The mono-ski has come a long way baby...

Newbie!

Just under a third of all participants this year are first timers

Air Force veteran Richard Ackerman of Cleveland, Ohio enjoys a smooth ride from a modern, flexible mono-ski.



SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Bidding Frenzy Ignites Over Painting at Sponsors Dinner

Here’s a new twist to this year’s Sponsor Dinner. In addition to the always great food, inspiring remarks and many awards presented to the Clinic’s generous sponsors, a first-time raffle was held. Lettie Blackburn of DAV, who is also a talented artist, donated a beautiful watercolor she had painted from photograph of a scene she shot at last year’s Winter Sports Clinic. Prior to the dinner, raffle tickets were sold for the watercolor. At the time of the drawing, a little under \$1,000 had been raised. As the ticket was about to be drawn, bidding opened again, raising the funds to almost \$2,000.

After the raffle ticket was drawn, the winner donated the print back for an additional raffle. The next winner was drawn, and that person also donated the picture back. Soon, the crowd started chanting “Auction! Auction! Auction!” Finally, Clinic Director Sandy Trombetta took charge of the microphone and the bidding started again instantly. Bids rose quickly to well over \$500, then the field narrowed to two bidders, with the winning bid coming in at \$1,000. So, in the course of approximately ten minutes the fundraiser from the raffle went from under \$1,000, to well over \$3,000. Since a

veteran can attend the Clinic for approximately \$1,000, this should allow three new veterans to attend next year’s event.

While this is a great story, the fun did not end there. The winning bidder was Jerry Ambrosch Jr., a sponsor from Vangent, Inc., who is attending the Clinic for the first time. Ambrosch approached the podium, made a few comments, then called a veteran participant to the podium – Paul Blais, from Hampton Va., who is

attending the event for the sixth time. Ambrose met Blais at Sunday’s dinner and was so impressed with the comments he made about the event that he wanted to donate the watercolor to him.

Our thanks to Lettie Blackburn and Jerry Ambrosch Jr., for adding some additional excitement to the Winter Sports Clinic Sponsor Dinner this year.



(From Left) Jerry Ambrosch, Jr., Lettie Blackburn, and Paul Blaise display the watercolor painting that created quite a stir.

Women Veterans Welcomed by Special Guest at Reception

Tonight at 6:30 p.m., all women veterans at the Clinic will have a unique opportunity to gather and share experiences and memories. A Women Veterans Reception will be held at the Two Creeks Lift Area in Snowmass Village. Fresh gourmet pastries baked by talented local chefs will be served.

Those attending will also have the chance to meet the extraordinary Betty Pfister, a World War II Women’s Air Force Service Pilot. Pfister learned to fly in 1941 and ferried Army aircraft for nearly

two years during WWII. In the years since, she has lead a fulfilling life, serving as a flight attendant for Pan Am, a flight instructor, an airlines pilot, and a member of the President’s Advisory Committee on Aviation. She also competed twice on the U.S. Helicopter Team. She has been inducted into the International Women in Aviation Pioneer Hall of Fame, and in addition, is listed as one of the 100 most influential women in the history of aviation by Aviation International.

what are YOU saying?

What movie can you watch over and over and why?



Jake Hipps
Buffalo, N.Y.
Marine Corps

“I’ve watched *Cadillac Records* 10 times this year. I really liked the story about the early days of Chess Records and Muddy Waters, Etta James and Chuck Barry. They all got Cadillacs!”



Evan Graver
Kenton, Ohio
Air Force

“My favorite move is *Bad Boys II*. I like all of the action and cool chase scenes, especially the scene with the boat coming off the trailer. There are great stunts!”



Andy Treventi
Loudonville, Ky.
Navy

“*Short Circuit*, because the robot kept on calling out ‘Stephanie’ – and that’s what we named our daughter. She’s 19 now!”



David Fowler
Katy, Texas
Army

“Going with the theme out here, my favorite movie is *The Bucket List*. I just want to keep living life to its fullest – every day that I can.”

VHP Here All Week

The Veterans History Project (VHP) honors vets by creating a legacy of their service. Regardless of branch, age, or experience, the VHP wants to record it.

Interviews take place in the Janss Auditorium at the conference center. Appointments are available through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., and Friday from 9 a.m. until noon. Stop by the Media Center (in the Erickson Room) for an appointment.

Surfs Up!

Attention everyone who attended the first National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego last September. An informal reunion “gathering” will be held this evening at the Cirque Bar, starting at 5:30 p.m. So eat an early dinner and join us for a beer or a soft drink and catch up with your fellow team members, team leaders, coaches and friends. Titans (All the Way), Olympus (Always on Top), Poseidon, Nautilus, and Neptune – this means you!

The Prosthetics Post

Welcome to another edition of the daily “Prosthetics Post” column in the Ski•Gram where you can get answers to frequently asked questions regarding prosthetics. Don’t forget, prosthetics professionals are here this week to answer your questions. Make sure to visit the

information booth at meal times on Tuesday and Wednesday as well as the presentation and open forum tonight at 6 p.m. in the Cabaret Room. Our website is always available for more information:

www.prosthetics.va.gov

Now for our question of the day:

Dear Prosthetics Post,
I had a great afternoon yesterday scuba diving. I’d like to keep doing it. Yesterday you told a reader VA provides sports and recreation equipment. How do I sign up to get my new scuba gear?

Sincerely,
New to Scuba Dude

Dear New to Scuba Dude,
Glad to hear you had a great time! *But...*most scuba gear is not “adaptive” so you will need to check out some other resources for that kind of gear. One great resource is the Challenged Athletes Foundation (www.challengedathletes.org). They have a great program “Operation Rebound” to support vets

and active duty service members with sports pursuits. Come to our session tonight at 6 p.m. at the Silvertree Cabaret room to learn more about sports and recreation equipment options. All of your questions can be answered there. Our website is also a great resource: www.prosthetics.va.gov

The Show on the Snow!



Nearly a Third of Clinic Attendees Are First Timers

Of the more than 350 veterans attending the 23rd National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, more than 110 – that’s nearly a third – are attending for the first time. For some, it is also their first time on skis. For others, it is their first time on the slopes in quite some time.

One is Jim Baugh, a WWII Army veteran from Idaho Falls, Idaho, who last skied when he was 17 or 18 years old. “I’m 87 now, so it’s been a while,” Baugh says. “I have been legally blind since 2003 and I’ve also been profoundly deaf since my Army days.” Baugh heard about the Clinic from his VA visual impairment coordinator and also from a friend at VA’s Western Blind Re-

habilitation Center. He has looked forward “with great enthusiasm” to enjoying the winter sports and meeting others here in Snowmass. Always up for new adventure, Baugh couldn’t want to try snowmobiling as well. “I haven’t done that yet so it will be fun,” he told us. “I think it’s important to stay busy and active in everything we can learn to do, and not let our disabilities interfere with a good life.”

Another greatest generation first timer is Bill Davenport, 86, from Santa Ana, Calif., an Army and Air Force veteran of WWII. Also visually impaired, Davenport says he’s “elated” to be at the Clinic this week, and “get the feel of the slopes again under some watchful, helpful

eyes. You must keep the body and senses active to lead a creditable life,” he says.

Jake Lietz, 29, an Army veteran from Great Falls, Mont., knows all about staying active. Since he was injured in a motor vehicle accident just 13 months ago, he’s lifted weights at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, surfed the Pacific Ocean at the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, and is now conquering the Rocky Mountains. A quadriplegic, Lietz heard about the Clinic from his recreation therapist at the VA in Seattle. “I snowboarded before my accident a few times but I’ve never skied so this will be interesting,” Lietz told us. “Where we live, I am not able to get out and

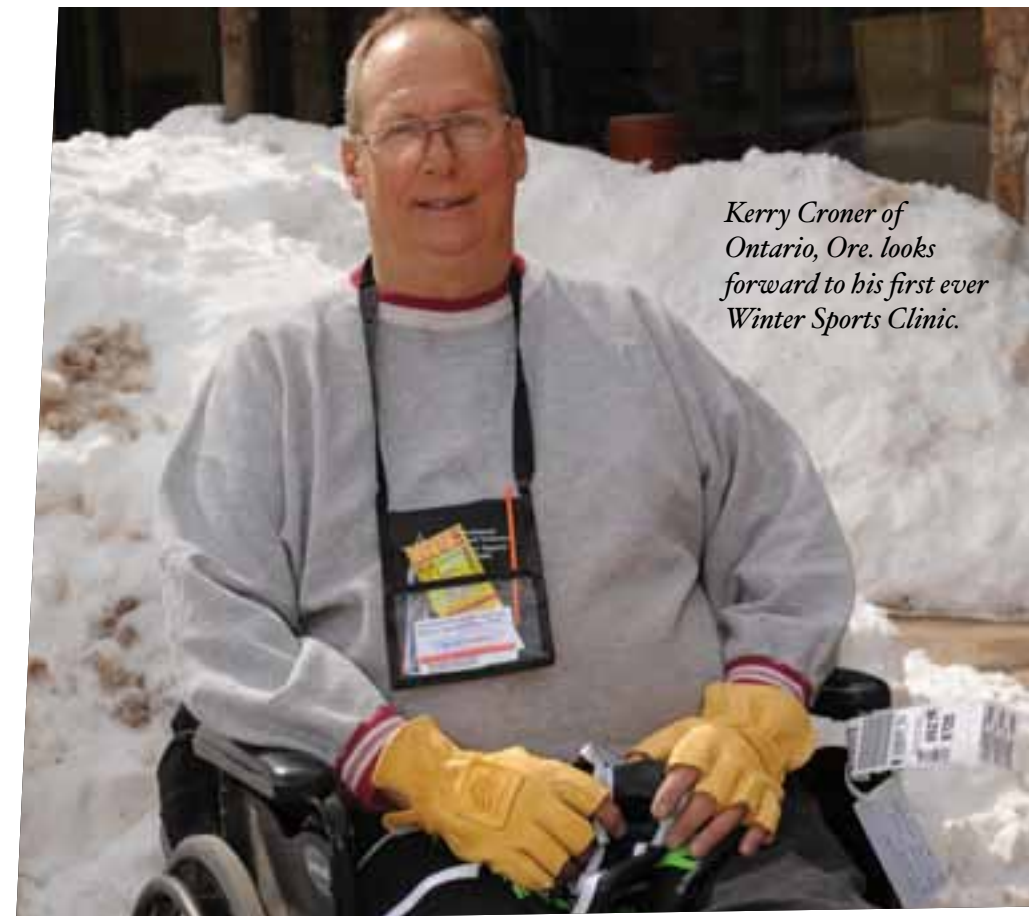
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be active very often so when I am given the chance to attend these events, I do. The friendships that are formed are also beyond words.” Lietz is especially excited to be here with his wife Keallie. “I couldn’t wait to see people I’ve met from the other events. Life gets so busy sometimes, and I’ve been wanting to see some friends and catch up. The chance to be able to do these events at all is well worth it; it gives you a new lease on life, really. Every vet who is able to attend should – it’s the best thing ever. It’s like a new adventure. Don’t ever stop learning how to live life better.”

Douglas Schwarz, 38 is another newcomer. A Gulf War Air Force veteran from Greenacres, Fla., Schwarz used to ski before his spinal cord injury more than 15 years ago. He hit the slopes in a mono-ski on Monday with the Buckskin team and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. “The ride up on the lift was beautiful – although it was a little scary coming straight down,” he said. “I only had two spills though!”

Schwartz describes his experience so far like this, “It’s fantastic — there are such wonderful people here. I met an 80-year-old veteran who still skis today! I will absolutely come back next year.” His goal next time is to try to get out of the mono-ski and ski standing up.

Back home, Schwartz has completed two marathons on his hand-cycle, which helps him keep in shape. This week, he is here with his service dog, “Macy,” who not only provides needed assistance but also doubles as his “chic magnet,” he says. “I wasn’t sure if I can get skis for her though,” Schwarz laughed. I’d tell other veterans “Get your butt here — you won’t have any fun unless you get out and try something.” For Mariette Firecloud, 51,



Kerry Croner of Ontario, Ore. looks forward to his first ever Winter Sports Clinic.

an Army veteran from Milwaukee, it’s the great outdoors that beckoned her to Snowmass Village. “I tried skiing one time when I was stationed overseas,” she remembers. “I wasn’t very good at it so I decided to sit on the wayside and watch everyone else go down the slope. Now, I’m very excited about the Winter Sports Clinic. I love being outdoors and able to take part in any outdoor event. I’ve looked forward to that, as well as enjoying nature, learning something new and getting to know the other veterans. This lets others who are not disabled see that disabled veterans continue to live active lives.”

Kerry Lee Croner, 59, is a Navy veteran from Ontario, Ore., who served from 1966-68. Croner, who has an above-the-knee amputation of the right leg, skied for 14 years before losing his leg in a 1976 accident. He skied twice at Bogus Mountain after the injury with an amputee coach, but that was one year after his accident – some 22

years ago. “Without this event, I couldn’t afford to go skiing,” Croner said matter-of-factly. “I’m excited to finally return to the slopes! I think that not just veterans but anyone should try to go out to the mountains and get together for a change of pace!”

Also wanting to try something new is Stephen Bush, 44, of Tampa, Fla., another Army veteran. “I learned about this event through the adaptive sports program at the Tampa VA Medical Center,” Bush, who has only ever skied once before, explained. A veteran of the Gulf War, Bush was injured in a 1995 mountain bike accident. “I’ve been very excited to get back on a ski and try to solo,” he says. He has also looked forward to snowmobiling. “This is a great opportunity for veterans to maybe try a new sport or to get out and play in the snow – if they can handle the cold!”

Extending a warm welcome to all of our first timers is sure to help combat those cold temps!

Adaptive Ski Equipment - Where it All Began

We’ve come a long way baby – or at least we have in the ski world. Adaptive ski equipment has continued to evolve since its inception. Disabled skiing can be traced to Europe around the time of World War II, when soldiers began returning home with injuries. They knew then what we know now – that rehabilitation through skiing helps to regain physical strength and confidence.

The earliest attempt at adaptive ski equipment consisted of a pair of underarm crutches fastened to a pair of short skis. This adaptation was specifically designed for those with amputations. As more and more people learned about the early adaptive gear, tremendous efforts were made to improve the quality of the adaptive ski equipment and to reach out to others.

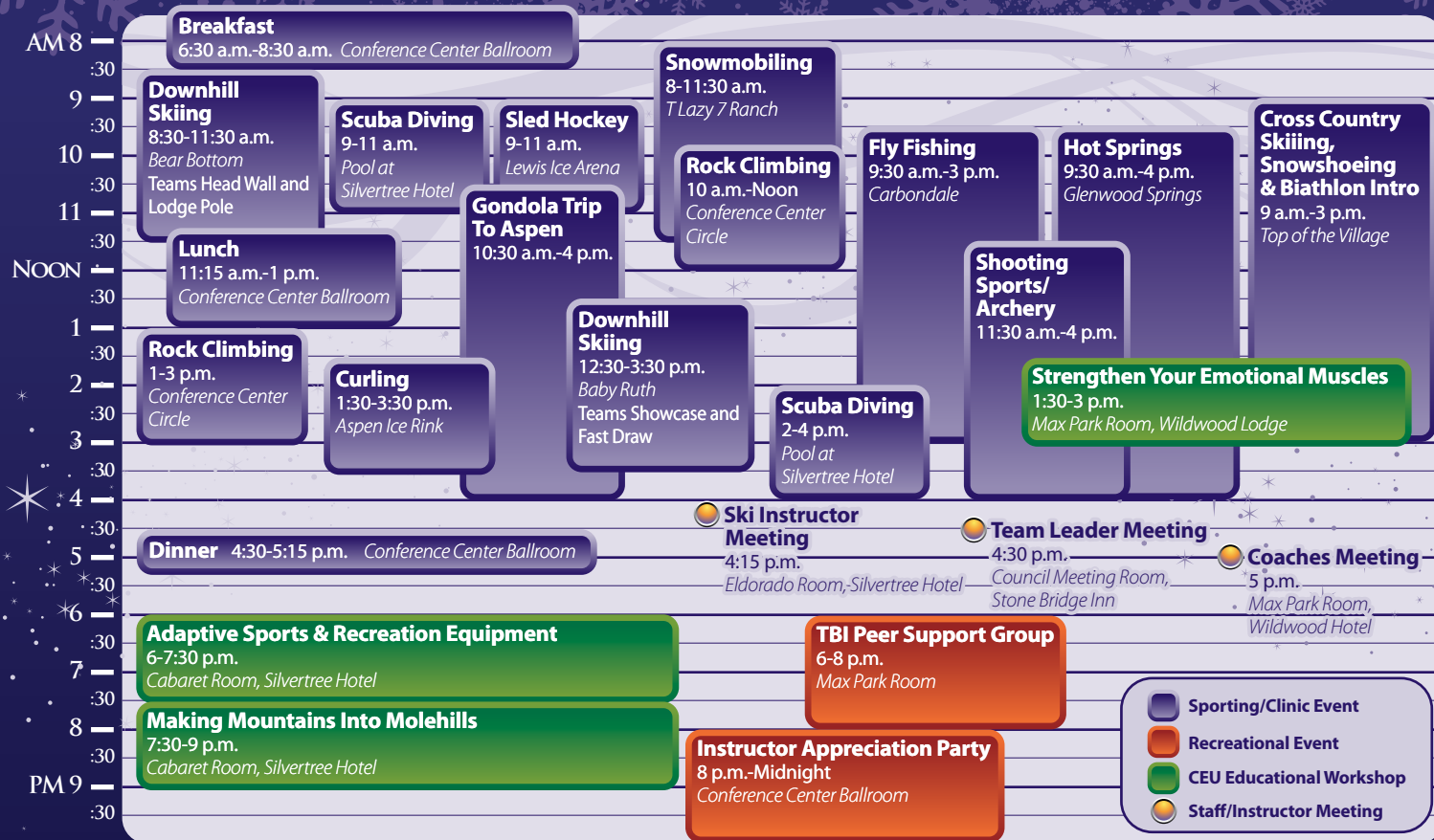
Adaptive skiing spread to the United States by word of mouth, and it soon flourished. As more and more people heard about the sport through others, as well as through magazines and films, the adaptive ski equipment continued to develop and meet the needs of people with other disabilities in addition to amputations. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, adaptive skiing progressed and became available for those with visual impairments. Additionally, those with spinal cord injuries and other mobility limitations could now participate in the sport as the

development of the sit-ski evolved. Today, there is ski equipment for everyone.

Richard Ackerman, an Air Force veteran representing the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center, has been a participant at the Winter Sports Clinic for the past nine years. “I use the mono-ski and it has come a long way,” said Ackerman. “The mono-ski today is more flexible, holds you in tight and allows for a smooth ride. This was not the experience I had initially.” Ackerman went on to say that he used adaptive ski equipment for the first time at the Clinic and looks forward to the trip every year. When asked how he was feeling right before that run down the slope for the very first time, he said he wasn’t nervous at all and was really looking forward to the ride. “I was ready to go,” said Ackerman. For those veterans who are here for the first time, Ackerman has some advice – “Relax and enjoy,” he said. “If it works for you, you’ll have something to look forward to every year.”

It was recognized in the beginning of disabled skiing, and still is today, that many veterans cherished playing sports prior to their injury and greatly missed the recreation, competition and camaraderie of it all. Adaptive ski equipment gives many the confidence in knowing that they have the ability to carry on a life worth living through sports – perhaps in a whole new way.

SCHEDULE FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 31



The Bulletin

Wheelchair and Prosthetics Repair

Located at the Host Room in the Conference Center.

Hours are:

6:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

In between these hours please call (970) 689-0049 for wheelchair assistance, and (970) 430-2007 for prosthetics needs. Please do not call after 6 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

WEATHER

TODAY

High: **34°**

Low: **22°**

Clouds with Snow

TOMORROW

High: **31°**

Low: **13°**

Clouds with Snow

Medical Room

For emergencies dial 911

Phone is **(970) 923-8330**. The room is located in the Bedford A conference room across the street from Mountain Chalet Hotel. Stairway access from the mall is next to Christy Sports. Wheelchair access is by the elevator at the far end of the mall above the bus terminal.

Transport: Van transport is available from the Silvertree Hotel to the medical room in the front of the hotel, or by calling the medical room.

After hours: Call the medical room for recorded instructions on how to contact the "on call" medical provider. If unsuccessful, call the hotel operator.

Massage

Complimentary massage is located in the Elbert room in the Silvertree Hotel. Please call (970) 980-7772 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily to schedule an appointment. Appointments will be scheduled until all slots are full.

Transportation Schedule

Event	Load	Depart
Snowmobiling		
First Trip	6:45 a.m.	7:15 a.m.
Second Trip	9 a.m.	9:30 a.m.
<i>Please make sure to load at your correct, scheduled time.</i>		
Sled Hockey	7:45 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
Fly Fishing	8 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
Cross Country Skiing		
First Trip	8:20 a.m.	8:45 a.m.
Second Trip	1 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
<i>Buses will run up and down the mountain throughout the day. The 1 p.m. bus will also pick up any participants from the first trip who wish to return to the Conference Center. All remaining participants will be picked up at 3 p.m.</i>		
Hot Springs	9:30 a.m.	10 a.m.
Trapshooting	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Aspen Gondola	10 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
Curling	12:45 p.m.	1 p.m.